

MAX SHEAN — CONDOLENCE

Statement by Member for Jandakot

MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot) [12.53 pm]: When I made my maiden speech in this house, I praised my friend and mentor Max Shean. I did not think that only six months later I would be standing here to pay my respects to such a great Western Australian. From his epic stories of convoy duties in the Atlantic to operations in a Norwegian fjord against the German battleship *Tirpitz*, Max always had a story to tell. He was always humble and always underestimated his own contribution. The 1955 movie *Above Us the Waves* retells the *Tirpitz* story. However, without a doubt, his most notable achievement was cutting the Tokyo-Singapore underwater communications cable in the muddy waters off the Mekong Delta—a feat that influenced the timing of the first and last use of atomic weapons in the history of mankind. Much will be written about the man who did more in World War II than any other Australian to influence the course of history; however, I will remember him as Max Shean—the most humble person I have ever known. A copy of Will Longstaff’s famous painting, *Menin Gate at Midnight*, hangs in Max and Mary’s home. Whenever I raised with Max his heroics in the South China Sea, he was always quick to point to the painting and say, “What I did was nothing special; the men who fought and died at Ypres are far more deserving heroes—they had it much harder than I ever did.” In 2007, Max joined us in HMAS *Farncomb* to dive off the coast of Rottneest. The impression he made on the crew of that submarine was awe inspiring. Max let go last lines on Tuesday, aged 90. Like everyone else who shared part of his life, my wife, Vicki, and I were always left humbled by Max’s selflessness and humility. His passing is a great loss to all of us and our sympathy goes to Mary, Heather, Ruth and the Shean family.